

MEDICAL REFORM GROUP

Box 40074, RPO Marlee, Toronto, Ontario M6B 4K4

February 7, 2006—For Immediate Release

MEDICAL REFORM GROUP CHALLENGES NEW HEALTH MINISTER

The MRG of Ontario has released an open letter to the new Health Minister, Tony Clement. The letter challenges the new government to deliver on its promises that make sense – and to drop the ones that don't.

“The MRG was delighted with your party's commitment to single-tier health care that you expressed during the campaign”, says MRG spokesperson, Dr. Gordon Guyatt, in the letter.

“Unfortunately, this commitment will be tested in the coming months. Ralph Klein's proposed legislation allowing private insurance for publicly insured services, and allowing physicians to work in both private and publicly financed systems, is a gross, blatant, unprecedented violation of the Canada Health Act.”

In the letter, Dr. Guyatt calls on Mr. Clement to speak out forcefully against the legislation, and to “bring the full weight of the Canada Health Act to bear on the provinces should they move forward.”

“We are asking the government to act now,” said another MRG spokesperson, Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi. “Mr. Clement's timely intervention before the legislation is passed could force Mr. Klein to rethink his plan, a plan that violates the fundamental principles of equitable health care.”

In its letter, the MRG raises a second issue, the Tory campaign promise to introduce guaranteed wait times. The letter argues that guaranteed wait times won't train a single needed doctor, or a single needed nurse. Furthermore, guaranteed wait times substitute length on a wait list for patient's need as a criterion for moving to the front of the line.

“Wait list targets – and especially monitoring of the extent to which targets are met – makes sense,” Dr. Guyatt concludes: “Guarantees do not. A major test for this new government is whether they will make the right decisions to strengthen public health care.”

- 30 -

For more information:

Dr. Gordon Guyatt (905) 525-91409, ext 22160 or 22900; pager (905) 521-5030

Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi (416) 685-9101 (pager)

Janet Maher (416) 770-1311

(416) 787-5246 [voice]; (416) 352-1454 [fax]
medicalreform@sympatico.ca [e-mail]; www.hwcn.org/link/mrg [web-site]